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## THE IDEAL AND LIFE.

BY FRIEDRICH SCHILLER.

S MOOTH, and ever clear, and crystal-bright,  
Flows existence zephyr-light,  
In Olympus where the blest recline.  
Moons revolve and ages pass away,  
But unchanged, 'mid ever-rife decay,  
Bloom the roses of their youth divine.  
Man has but a sad choice left him now,  
Sensual joy and soul-repose between;  
But upon the great Celestial's brow  
Wedded is their splendor seen.

Wouldst thou here be like a deity,  
In the realm of death be free;  
Never seek to pluck its garden's fruit!  
On its beauty thou may'st feed thine eye;  
Soon the impulse of desire will fly  
And enjoyment's transient bliss pollute.  
E'en the Styx that nine times flows around  
Ceres' child's return could not delay;  
But she grasped the apple—and was bound  
Evermore by Orcus' sway.

Fate's dark power our bodies claims alone  
Nor ought else can ever own.  
Form is never bound by time's design.  
She the gods' companion, blest and bright

Liveth in eternal realms of light  
'Mongst the deities, herself divine.  
Wouldst thou on her pinions soar on high,  
Throw away the earthly and its woe!  
To the ideal realm for refuge fly  
From this narrow life below.

Ever young, crowned with Perfection's ray  
Free from any taint of clay,  
Man's eternal archetype lives here.  
So life's silent phantoms brightly gleam  
While they wander near the Stygian stream.  
And in heaven e'en she did thus appear,  
The Immortal one, ere she descended  
Down to the Sarcophagus so drear.  
While in life the conflict's never ended,  
Victory for aye is here.

Not to free us from the stress of life,  
But to strengthen for new strife,  
Are here offered wreaths of victory.  
Though we fain would rest, yet stern and strong,  
Ruthlessly life carries us along  
On the whirlpool of time's restless sea.  
But when courage flags and when our soul  
Feels the limits of its senses dull,  
From the hill tops of the Beautiful  
We behold the longed-for goal.

Life demands to govern and defend;  
Wrestlers bravely must contend  
On the path of fortune or renown.  
Boldness clashes daringly with force,  
And the rolling chariots thunder down  
To the goal in dust-beclouded course.

Valor only gains the prizes great  
In the races of the hippodrome.  
T'is the strong alone who conquer Fate  
While the weak are overcome.

Yet life's stream while rocks its course enclose  
Wildly foams 'gainst crags; it flows  
Gentle and meanders sinuous,  
Where its way through beauty's realm it wendeth.  
In its silver mirror its wave blendeth  
Both Aurora and blithe Hesperus.  
Warring passions here have respite found.  
Reconciled by art they now appear  
Gracefully in mutual union bound  
And no enemy is near.

If with ardor genius createth,  
Soul with lifeless marble mateth,  
To dead stuff through beauteous form gives worth;  
Then let energy strain every nerve  
'Till the brutal elements will serve  
And the artist's noble thought bring forth.  
Only he who seeks with toilsome glow  
Hears the murmuring spring of hidden truth;  
Only to the valiant chisel's blow  
Yields the marble block uncouth.

When we enter into beauty's spheres  
Dead inertia disappears;  
Of the dust it is and dust it sways  
But the statue as from nothing sprung  
From dead mass seems without labor wrung.  
There it stands before the ravished gaze,  
Quelled are struggles and all doubts allayed  
At the mastery thus nobly won;

And whatever might have still betrayed  
Human frailty, now 'tis gone.

When in helpless nakedness man faces  
Law's keen search, his pride abases;  
Guilt e'en to the Holiest draws nigh.  
Stoutest virtue quails before truth's ray;  
The ideal unattained and high  
Leaves behind deeds of our noblest day.  
Mortals all their final goal will miss  
For no ferry neither bridge will bear  
Over this deep sundering abyss,  
And no anchor catches there.

But by fleeing from the sense-confined  
To the freedom of the mind  
The dread specter of our fear hath flown.  
Then the deep abyss at once will fill;  
When we God receive into our will,  
He descendeth from his lordly throne.  
Servile minds alone who scorn law's sway  
Need the castigation of its rod,  
And with man's resistance dies away  
E'en the sovereignty of God.

If by misery your soul is grasped  
Like Laocoon enclasped  
In the dreadful coil of vicious snakes,  
Then 'tis right to show your indignation;  
To the welkin ring man's lamentation  
Till a tender heart for pity breaks.  
Let the voice of nature's awe prevail,  
Hush loud joy and let her face grow pale;  
The immortal soul subdued will be  
Thus by holy sympathy.

But in yonder regions of pure form  
 Realms serene, e'er free from storm,  
 Misery and sorrow cease to rave.  
 There our sufferings no more pierce the soul,  
 Tears of anguish there no longer roll,  
 Nought remains but mind's resistance brave.  
 Painted on the canvas of the cloud,  
 Beauteous as the rainbow's colored hue,  
 E'en on melancholy's mournful shroud  
 Rest reigns in empyreal blue.

Heracles in deep humiliation,  
 Faithful to his destination,  
 Served the coward in life's footsore path.  
 Labors huge wrought he, Zeus' noble scion:  
 He the hydra slew and hugged the lion,  
 And to free his friends faced Pluto's wrath;  
 Crossed the Styx in Charon's doleful bark;  
 Willingly he suffered Hera's hate,  
 Bore her burdens, grievous care and cark  
 And in all he showed him great,

'Til his course was run, 'til he in fire  
 Stripped the earthly on the pyre,  
 'Til a god he breathed empyreal airs.  
 Blithe he now in new-got power of flight  
 Upward soars from joyful height to height,  
 And as an ill dream sink earth's dull cares.  
 Glory of Olympus him enfoldeth,  
 'Mongst the gods transfigured standeth he,  
 From the nectar cup which Hebe holdeth  
 Drinks he immortality.'

#### TRANSLATOR'S COMMENTS.

Whether or not philosophical poetry exists is a problem which has often been ventilated and is mostly answered in the negative, but

we beg to differ from this view although we grant that philosophical poetry will necessarily be caviar to the general. Philosophers or philosophically minded thinkers only will take to it, and so its public will necessarily be limited.

Poetry differs from other literature, especially from scientific exposition, in that it expresses the writer's sentiments, and so anything that affects our emotional nature may become an object of poetry. The poet speaks from his heart and appeals to the hearts of his audience. He does not argue, he stirs the soul. If then philosophical thoughts are capable of arousing and elevating our souls and of inspiring us with the glow of enthusiasm, they may fitly find poetical expression.

Goethe's *Faust* in its main tendency as well as in many of its details, and to some extent Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, are philosophical; so also are quite a number of poems of Goethe, of Schiller, of Herder and of Lessing, but among them Schiller's hymn, "The Ideal and Life" takes a high rank, and we offer here to our readers a new translation.

\* \* \*

No better recommendation for this anthem of Schiller's philosophy can be given than the fact that the poet's friend Humboldt, a philologist of no mean standing, admired it and read it in the secrecy of his study as a devotee would read a psalm or say his prayers.

So far as we know there exist three translations of this most difficult poem, one by Bulwer Lytton, another by Edgar A. Bowring and a third one by William Norman Guthrie. Those of Bulwer Lytton and Mr. Guthrie change the meter from the trochaic into an iambic rhythm, although the more ponderous cadence was most probably chosen on purpose by Schiller in preference to the easier and forward-running measure.

\* \* \*

A few remarks are needed in explanation of Schiller's philosophy here presented in poetic form.

Schiller distinguishes between material concrete actuality and the realm of pure form. The former is the world of sense, or pain and struggle, of sin and disease, and of death, the latter has its existence in thought and serves us in life as the source of our ideals.

The realm of pure form knows nothing of the ills of life and it finds its revelation in art, "on the hill tops of the beautiful."

Schiller's sympathy with ancient Greece makes him utilize the figures of the Greek gods as the eternal types of pure forms, and he introduces the myth of Proserpine (or Persephone), the daughter of Ceres, to illustrate how pure form is incarnated into bodily existence and how the joy of sense, the eating of the apple,<sup>1</sup> renders the goddess subject to the sway of Orcus, the god of death.<sup>2</sup>

Among the pure forms are mentioned first (in Stanza 1) the celestials, the Olympian gods, then pure form herself,<sup>3</sup> further the archetype of manhood<sup>4</sup> in its ideal perfection, and lastly the souls of the departed, who have stripped off their mortal coil and wander as transfigured phantoms on the Stygian stream.<sup>5</sup>

Life is a struggle and must be such; the ideal remains un-attained, and even the holiest is not free from guilt. But in art, in the realm of the ideal, we enjoy the rapture of a beatific vision; we find comfort in the beautiful and all misery disappears.

In conclusion Schiller describes Hercules, the ideal man of ancient Greece, characterizing him in words that remind one of Christ, the Logos made flesh, and this very consummation of Schiller's philosophy proves that his line of thought is nearer to Christianity than the pagan imagery of the poem seems to warrant. P. C.

<sup>1</sup> In the Greek myth it is a pomegranate, but Schiller prefers the more modern and popular view that it was an apple.

<sup>2</sup> Stanza 2, lines 7-10 and Stanza 4, 6-8.

<sup>3</sup> Stanza 3, lines 2, 3, and 4-6, "Form, the god's companion....herself divine."

<sup>4</sup> Stanza 4, lines 1-3.

<sup>5</sup> Stanza 4, lines 4-10.